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WHATSAPP PRIVACY POLICY ON HOLD TILL NEW LAW COMES IN

Until the data protection bill comes into force, WhatsApp won't force users to opt for its new policy, it told Delhi HC

WON'T LIMIT THE APP'S FUNCTIONALITY

WhatsApp clarified that it won't limit the app's functionality for users not opting for new policy, in the meantime. "Government has asked to shut down the policy. We have said we won't enforce it till Data Protection Bill comes out. If the Bill allows me to do it, we'll have entirely different ramifications," senior counsel Harish Salve, appearing for Whatsapp, said

NO BASIS FOR PROBE NOW, SAYS SALVE

- The HC was hearing a plea by Facebook and WhatsApp against a regulatory probe into the latter's new policy. Now that the policy is put on hold, there's no basis for such a probe, Salve argued
- The Personal Data Protection Bill seeks to regulate the use of individual's data by the government and private companies | P9

53 crore

USERS IN INDIA WILL CONTINUE TO GET REMINDERS ABOUT PRIVACY UPDATE

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NEET likely to be postponed, NTA to take final call

SUMI SUKANYA DUTTA @New Delhi

THE August 1 date for the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) is likely to be changed, though the National Testing Agency, which administers the test, has not made a final decision, sources told this newspaper. The test could be held in September, if the Covid situation in the country remains conducive, sources said.

"As of now we are consulting all the stakeholders involved, including the National Medical Commission," said a senior NTA official. The matter will be discussed with the newly-inducted Education and Health Ministers—Dharendra Pradhan and Mansukh Mandaviya—in the coming days, sources said, adding that sufficient time will be given to candidates to register and prepare for the competitive exam. "We understand that there is a lot of anxiety among students as the registrations for the examination are yet to begin. However, we need to strike a balance between the safety of the candidates and academic calendars of medical colleges," the source added.

Last year, NEET was held on September 13, in the middle of the first wave of the pandemic, despite widespread protests to defer it. The results were declared a month later. This year too, many students have taken to social media demanding that the exam be pushed to a later date.

Registration for NEET normally begins 60 days prior to the test date. It has not begun yet. With the announcement of the dates for the third and fourth sessions of JEE (Main), there have been speculations that NEET too could be held in a month.

The April and May sessions of the JEE (Main) examination will now be held between July 20 and August 2.

Authorities said since JEE (Main) is a computer-based test and is held over several days, it is easier to manage crowds at test centres. In contrast, NEET is a paper-based test and will see more than 12 lakh students taking it across the country on the same day.

HIGH ON HOPE

Green light for Covaxin likely in 4-6 weeks: WHO expert

CHETANA BELAGERE @Bengaluru

THE World Health Organisation (WHO) is likely to take a decision on including Bharat Biotech's Covaxin in its list of vaccines approved for emergency use, in four to six weeks, the world body's Chief Scientist Dr Soumya Swaminathan has said. A WHO pre-qualification, or Emergency Use Listing, is necessary for a vaccine manufacturer to supply vaccines to global entities such as COVAX or even internationally.

At a webinar organised by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) on Friday, Dr Swaminathan explained that the company needs to complete its phase-3 trials and submit the whole dossier to the regulatory department of the WHO. This is then examined by an expert advisory group and, based on completeness of the data, which includes safety and efficacy, manufacturing quality standards, etc., the approval is granted.

"I understand that Bharat Biotech is in this process and I think a decision on their case is likely in the next four to six weeks," said Dr Soumya Swaminathan.

Experts insisted that the only way to contain the virus from continuing to spread is to share vaccines and beat the "vaccine apartheid." CONTINUED ON: P3

Time for Uniform Civil Code in the country: Delhi HC

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

THE Uniform Covil Code was back on the fruntburner with a Delhi High Court judge directing the Centre to take necessary measures to implement it.

The order came in response to a question on the applicability of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 to members of the Meena community. While the verdict was delivered on July 7, it was made public on Friday.

Justice Prathiba M Singh said the Indian society is gradually becoming more and more homogeneous, and traditional barriers such as religion, community, and caste are dissipating. As such, a uniform civil code is in order, she said.

'UCC should not remain mere hope'

The hope expressed in Article 44 of the Constitution that the State shall secure for its citizens Uniform Civil Code should not remain a mere hope, the Delhi High Court noted

A Uniform Civil Code provides for a uniform law for the entire country, applicable to members of all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc. Currently, different religious laws like Hindu Marriage Act, Hindu Succession Act, Indian Christian Marriages Act etc regulate these matters. Muslim personal laws are not codified and are based on their religious texts.

In the 27-page judgment, Justice Singh observed that courts have repeatedly been confronted with conflicts that arise out of a clash of personal laws. People belonging to various communities, castes, and religions, who forge marital bonds, struggle with such conflicts.

"The youth of India belonging to various communities, tribes, castes, or religions who solemnise their marriages ought not to be forced to struggle with issues arising due to conflicts in various personal laws," Justice Singh said. "Such a civil code would be common to all," the court said.

Port and air traffic, manufacturing and services yet to pick up momentum; inflation worry stays

Economy revival remains bumpy

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

THE economy showed signs of revival in June from the adverse impact of the Covid-19 second wave, but recovery was uneven with manufacturing and services sectors among the laggards while inflation remained a matter of concern, the Finance Ministry said in its latest monthly economy report.

"Recovery remains uneven with indicators such as port traffic, air traffic, PMI Manufacturing and Services demonstrating lagged revival from the impact of second wave. Latest industrial production estimates show sequential moderation in growth of India's eight core industries at 16.8% YoY in May 2021, 8% lower than pre-Covid May 2019 level," the report said.

However, it expressed optimism that recent policy measures will accelerate the pace of recovery. "Resilient tax collections of the Central Government in the first two months of FY 2020-21 and sustained momentum in capital expenditure, particularly in the road and rail sector, augurs well for pivoting targeted fiscal support for continued economic recovery," it said.

Going forward, the ministry feels investment in flagship schemes will further enhance consumption. "Consumption sentiment is expected to pick up with further enhancement of employment support under Aatma Nirbhar Bharat Rozgar Yojana (ANBRY) and wider Bharat-Net digitisation coverage."

Crude rates may hurt inflation

Unlocking states with declining caseload would mitigate cost pressures. But rising global commodity prices could impact inflation, the report said

But worries on supply side bottlenecks and inflation remained. "A positive price momentum cutting across food, fuel and core categories, along with an unfavourable base effect contributed to this rise in headline inflation. Inflation in rural areas at 6.48% was higher than in urban areas at 6.04% in May 2021," the report pointed out, attributing it to rising global crude oil prices and a low base effect.

Recently, all core sub-groups registered a pick-up in inflation like in clothing and footwear, household goods and services as well as personal care items.

MOVEMENT IN INDIA'S HIGH FREQUENCY INDICATORS

Indicator	Mar 20	Jun 20	Sep 20	Dec 20	Jan 21	Feb 21	Mar 21*	Apr 21*	May 21*	Jun 21*
8-Core Industries (Index)	134	116	121	136	139	128	149.2	130.7	125.8	
IIP-Consumer durable goods	88	78	129	124	124	125	128.9	112.4	-	
IIP-Consumer Non-durable goods	122	148	147	159	148	147	155.2	142.3	-	
Domestic auto sales (Lakh)	10	11	21	14	17	17	18	13	4	
PMI manufacturing (Index)	51.8	47.2	56.8	56.4	57.7	57.5	55.4	55.5	50.8	48.1
Domestic air passengers traffic (Lakh)	150	39	78	144	152	154	153	110.851	39.596	
Port cargo traffic (Million Tonnes)	61	49	54	63	64	59	72	62	60	
Rail freight traffic (Tonnes)	103070	93580	102300	118290	119790	112330	122190	111470	114800	112780
Crude oil Indian basket (USD/barrel)	33.3	40.6	41.4	49.9	54.6	62.2	64.7	63.3	67	72
Non-food credit (₹Lakh crore)	103	102	102	105	106	107	107	108	107	

Note: *Growth calculated over 2019 value | Source: Department of Economic Affairs

CHINA FREES UP $154 BN TO SUPPORT SMALL BIZ

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @New Delhi

AMID signs of flagging economic recovery, China on Friday slashed its reserve requirement ratio (RRR) by 0.5 percentage points, which will free up $154 billion for banks and pump more liquidity into the system.

The country took a similar decision in April last year during the first Covid wave peak.

The cut aims to help smaller businesses, boost domestic consumption and address the negative impact of rising raw material prices on small businesses.

According to a report by HSBC, supply-chain constraints and production bottlenecks have fuelled inflationary pressures, hurting small businesses. And surging commodity prices increased operating costs, especially for smaller China firms.

On Friday, the National Bureau of Statistics reported that China's producer-price index rose 8.8% in June from a year earlier, but lower than May's year-on-year rise of 9.0%.

Experts claim cutting RRR will help India indirectly by easing of cost of imports. "Both economies are different and not comparable. While China is continuously injecting liquidity, this move will certainly help in softening of global commodity price and help many nations that depend on Chinese imports," a senior official from the commerce ministry said.

JAB-O-METER

TAKE YOUR SHOT

July 8: 36,08,940 doses
July 9: 27,86,028 doses

TOTAL DOSES: 37,19,25,602

NATIONWIDE	JULY 8	JULY 9
Fresh cases	45,892	43,393
Recoveries	44,291	44,459
Deaths	817	911

KARNATAKA	JULY 8	JULY 9
Fresh cases	2,530	2,290
Recoveries	3,344	3,045
Deaths	62	68

Gehlot to be sworn in Guv tomorrow

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

GOVERNOR-designate Thawar Chand Gehlot will be sworn in at 10.30 am on Sunday by Karnataka High Court Chief Justice Abhay Srinivas Oka, who will administer the oath of office and secrecy.

Gehlot (73), who was Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment, and was leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha, will be the 19th governor of the state, after the President announced his appointment on July 6. His predecessor Vajubhai Vala has been the governor since 2014.

Sources in the government said Thawar Chand Gehlot will leave Delhi at 10.30 am on Saturday by a special flight and arrive in Bengaluru around 1 pm. He will be accompanied by a team of bureaucrats - Ramesh Kumar Neeraj Semwal, Pankaj Kumar Mehta, Yogesh Upadhyay, Shankar Lal and the ADC. The sources said he will be received at Raj Bhavan with a guard of honour and a welcome meal has been planned at the Raj Bhavan for the Governor-designate on Saturday afternoon. P4

INTO HISTORY BOOKS

Italy's Matteo Berrettini defeated Poland's Hubert Hurkacz during their men's singles semi-final match of the 2021 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon, Southwest London, on Friday. Berrettini became the first Italian to reach the singles final at the Wimbledon | AFP | P19

Four officials dismissed for causing loss to govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Shivamogga/Chikkamagaluru

THE State Government has dismissed Sringeri sub-registrar H S Cheluvaraju, S N Prabha, sub-registrar at the head office, and two second division assistants (SDAs) from service for "cheating" the government by tampering with challans during their posting at the sub-registrar's office in Mandya.

Cheluvaraju, when he was Sringeri sub-registrar, had filed a case against Revenue Minister R Ashoka's 'secretary' Gangadhara B for allegedly demanding money from him and threatening him when he reportedly refused to pay up.

However, his dismissal from service was in connection with the challan tampering case, which was ordered for investigation on November 13, 2006. P6

Can convince farmers, not those who are politically motivated, says Shobha

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

ON her second day in office as Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmer Welfare, Shobha Karandlaje seems to have hit the ground running when she termed the ongoing farmers' protest at Delhi's borders as "politically motivated".

Insisting that the three agriculture laws will be beneficial for farmers, the minister said she also hails from a farmer's family. "As a government, we can hold talks with farmers, respond to their problems and solve them, but we can't solve politics. The protests are politically motivated. It is not the farmers who are protesting the laws. it is politically motivated persons using farmers as an excuse. These three laws will not be repealed. We will go to farmers and explain the benefits," she told the media in New Delhi.

Although Karandlaje has made similar comments in the past, her remarks as MoS for farmer welfare has not gone down well with the farming community

"Her comments expose her ignorance about the issue. As a minister, she should be working towards holding talks with farmers and arriving at a solution instead of taunting and ridiculing us," warned Kodihalli Chandrasekhar, president, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha and Hasiru Sene.

Unable to get a good price, farmer Navnath destroys the pomegranate crop at his field at Ajur near Athani in Belagavi district | EXPRESS

Pomegranate farmer destroys crop to cut losses

NAUSHAD BIJAPUR @ Belagavi

FARMERS in several parts of the state are facing huge losses due to a sharp fall in prices, coupled with a lack of demand for their produce. Compounding their problems, crops hit by diseases are making the situation further worse.

Unable to sustain the losses he suffered due to various reasons despite a bumper yield of pomegranate cultivated on two acres, farmer Navnath of Ajur, near Athani, destroyed all his crop. He could neither get decent returns nor protect his plantation from diseases, forcing him to take the drastic step.

According to officials, several horticulture plantations in the district are damaged due to the uncontrolled spread of diseases of late. Such diseases are the result of adverse climatic conditions, they said. CONTINUED ON: P4

EXPRESS READ

PUC II results likely on July 20, says minister

Bengaluru: Primary and Secondary Education Minister S Suresh Kumar said the PUC II results are likely to be declared on July 20. PUC II students can also view their PU I and SSLC (or Class 10) marks on the Student Tracking System (STS) portal by July 12, to rectify discrepancies, if any | P2

Maha, Kerala account for 53% of new cases

New Delhi: Maharashtra and Kerala accounted for 53 % of the total coronavirus cases being reported in India during the last week. Maharashtra reported 21% of the cases and Kerala 34%. "We are coordinating with the two state governments," Lav Agarwal, a joint secretary in the Union health and family welfare ministry, said | P9

Now pay fine and get green clearance

New Delhi: The Union environment ministry has come up with a standard operating procedure for laying down penalty for violation of environmental norms and giving post-facto approvals. Environmentalists said the new directions will normalise environmental violations | P9